ANN ARBOR

Trump policies create fear, uncertainty

Some local businesses marked "A Day Without Immigrants" this month to highlight the ways immigrants boost the economy and workforce.

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Fear is something that is not only impacting Benjamin Garduno's business. It's impacting his community, he said.

Garduno runs Ann Arbor's La Piña Loca. Since President Donald Trump's immigration enforcement orders, he and other Hispanic restaurant owners have noticed the shift in sales and community involvement.

Support for the community is more important than ever before, Garduno added.

Garduno was one of several other small business owners throughout Washtenaw County to close Feb. 3. It wasn't just to have the day off — it was a chance to stand for their beliefs.

Some of these businesses participated in "A Day Without Immigrants" to raise awareness for the role immigrants have on the American economy and workforce.

The nationwide campaign circulated on social media before coming to Michigan. Other businesses across the state participated, including in Grand Rapids and Muskegon.

Immigrant workers were encouraged to not show up to work, go to school or shop as part of the "Day without Immigrants" protest, which is in response to several executive orders passed by Trump seeking to curb illegal immigration in the United States.

Dos Hermanos Express in Scio Township also participated. Closing for the day was a way to support the Latino community, co-owner Alex Arreola said.

"We lost money, but who cares?" he said. "We rather support the people and let

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Reyes and Nicolas Arreola closed down their restaurant, Dos Hermanos Mexican Grill, to highlight the immigration issue. *MLive files*

IMMIGRANTS

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them know that we're all here. We all have to support each other."

All of the family-run Dos Hermanos locations across Michigan participated, including the restaurant and market in Ypsilanti.

Reyes Arreola, Alex's father, is one of the Ypsilanti location's owners. The decision to close may have seemed easy, but it still took a financial toll on the restaurant.

"It meant a lot for us to close," he said. "At the end, it's not a lot to lose, because our people support us back."

Reyes Arreola is an immigrant from Mexico. He said this day was important to him because he could show support for other immigrants in the community.

Dos Hermanos also closed for a day during Trump's first presidential term, Alex Arreola said, adding few businesses participated back then. He said his family was going to participate this year, whether it was a whole group or just a few businesses closing.

Reyes Arreola said business for the fast-casual Mexican restaurant in Ypsilanti has also gone down tremendously since Trump took office.

Garduno said the majority of his customers at La Piña Loca are Hispanic. Fear around Immigration and Customs Enforcement has caused many customers to stay home, similarly to other restaurants like Dos Hermanos, he said.

Trump has been fulfilling his campaign promise to control immigration by passing a handful of executive orders. These orders include increasing screening for immigrant visas, ensuring undocumented citizens aren't receiving public benefits and suspending the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program.

Many of these orders are focused on impacting the country's southern border specifically, since Trump has declared a state of emergency at the U.S.-Mexico border.

Garduno said even those living legally within the United States are afraid. Alex Arreola agrees many people are living in fear going to work or even driving their car.

"People are just scared for the most simple things, because they are scared to get stopped by law enforcement or to run into border patrol," he said.

Garduno believes the recent crackdown on immigration is "unfair," since many are just trying to support their family and create a better life for themselves, he said.

"We're hoping that day (we closed that) it was implied that there's nothing to be scared of. We should all fight and unite as a family together in the community."

Sharon Garcia, manager at Encuentro Latino Restaurant in Ypsilanti

A social media post on La Piña Loca's page further mentioned the reason for the closure.

"As we do respect everyone's beliefs ... we also asked for ours to be respected ... we STRONGLY BELIEVE that no human should live in fear and no family should be torn apart," the post stated. "We are all Humans. We all have feelings, and we all are looking for a better future."

Garduno opened his business in January 2019. He said his sales today feel similar to how they were when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, but he is hopeful things will change.

"The only thing that I can say is if you don't do anything or you haven't done anything wrong, then you just keep going. You have to keep doing your life the way it's supposed to be," he said.

Encuentro Latino Restaurant in Ypsilanti also is feeling the loss of its Hispanic customers. The restaurant plans to start delivering to serve those who are scared.

"We're hoping that day (we closed that) it was implied that there's nothing to be scared of," manager Sharon Garcia said. "We should all fight and unite as a family together in the community."

All the restaurant owners said they would close again if another day like this happened in the future. Alex Arreola is just hopeful even more Hispanic businesses will participate next time.

"I hope if this were to happen again, that every business would support," he said. "We all need support, and we need to support each other."